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WZZM13.com

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University leaders get ready to battle for more money

Lansing - Several university presidents made their case Friday for increasing higher education funding. They made the points to members of the Michigan Senate's higher education subcommittee while they met at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

The presidents told lawmakers improving higher education is urgent in order to help Michigan's economy.

Grand Valley State University President Mark Murray told lawmakers, "This is a very dynamic world, a very competitive environment. And our capacity to compete continues to be gravely challenged."

He and others have a warning about the future of Michigan's economy. Murray says, "There is no question, skills and innovation are the keys to the future. We need higher skills, we need more innovation."

Some lawmakers, like Senator Bill Hardiman of Kentwood, agree. He says, "Higher education is the engine that is going to run this new economy. So, we have to invest, we have to educate folks in this area so we can compete with the world."

But, how much more will that cost? Murray says a few percent more per year isn't enough. And since GVSU is the lowest funded public university per student, he wants to see money distributed more evenly. He says, "What we've had in K-12 is, as you add students you get more money. As you reduce students, you get less money. Money follows the students. The model is working well in K-12. It's not flawless. But, higher education would be much better off with a similar approach."

If some changes aren't made, and the economy doesn't improve, the presidents warn that Michigan may lose its educated workforce. Ferris State University President David Eisler told the committee, "What I'm noticing is an interesting trend at the number of businesses and industries who are coming to campus to try to recruit our students to move out of state."

Governor Jennifer Granholm is proposing a two percent increase in higher education funding. But, she and some legislators disagree about where that money will come from.

GVSU President Murray also suggests the state come up with a policy formula for higher education that considers things like enrollment and graduation rates.

The educators also commented on issues related to Kindergarten through 12th grade education. Western Michigan University President Judith Bailey told committee members she thinks the new K-16 funding proposal is flawed. She thinks its bad public policy to allow voters to determine how tax money is divided, rather than leaving it up to the legislators.

Grand Valley State University President Mark Murray also commented on proposed increases in high school graduation requirements. He warns that the currently required

government course became a simplified class because everyone had to pass it in order to graduate. Murray warns against allowing proposed requirements like biology and chemistry to be watered down so that all students can pass. He stressed the importance of rigorous high school courses.

Pioneer

March 1, 2006

'Seek out the free money': As interest rates climb, students and parents advised to watch financial aid opportunities

BIG RAPIDS - While it's hard to put a price on the chance an education offers for a better future, it's becoming increasingly easier to see the price of the education.

Tuition rates tend to increase at colleges and universities ... but so do the interest rates on student loans.

President George W. Bush signed the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 into law Feb. 8. The law, which will take effect July 1, will cause interest rates on federal education loans to change from variable to fixed - and those fixed rates will be higher. The student aid budget was cut \$12 million, explained Ronnie Higgs, assistant vice president of student affairs at Ferris State University. Most of that money will come from the loan program, in the form of the higher interest rates.

"That's where the savings (to the federal government) come from," Higgs said.

Stafford loans will have a fixed interest rate of 6.8 percent, compared to the variable rate of 4.75 to 5.38 percent. Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students, known as PLUS loans, will be fixed at 8.5 percent, up from 6.125 percent. Some paperwork regarding PLUS loans gives the fixed rate at 7.9 percent, but that rate is an error. The error will be corrected in time for the 8.5 percent rate to take effect July 1.

Higgs and others in the financial aid department at FSU are doing what they can to educate students about the coming increase and help them make financially sound decisions.

"We try to educate the students as to the impact of the act," Higgs, said. "It's the only thing we can do."

Higgs said current students are buildings on weekends - already being done;

- Limiting hiring outside speakers - already being done;
- Bargaining not to hire an outside bargainer for contracts - \$10,000;
- Eliminating Dressel Writing Program - \$8,000 (already put into affect);
- Joining and taking advantage of the Mecosta Osceola Personnel Cooperative - unknown (already joined);
- Limiting out-of-town trips for administrators - negligible;
- Reorganizing bus routes - negligible (was done in 2002);
- Pay-to-play athletics at BRHS - \$18,000 (figured at \$60 per student);

- Pay-to-play athletics at BRMS - \$5,000 (figured \$60 per student);
- Bargaining early retirement buy-out incentive - unknown; and
- Bargaining to stop paying , schedule B positions - unknown.

"I don't think anybody has been enthusiastic about cutting teachers," Dan Bell said during public comment. "... But we've seen that that is all there is left to cut. Nobody wants to cut teachers, but we're at the point that there's no other alternative."

The board members agreed that they would like to have a plan in place for 2006-07 budget cuts by mid April. Possible future budget meetings will be discussed at the next BRPS board meeting set for March 13 at 7 p.m. at the BRHS Media Center.

Business Week

March 1, 2006

Michigan Governor Talks Design

Jennifer Granholm tells Corporate Design Foundation Chairman Peter Lawrence about her plan to make the state the innovation capital of the U.S.

Could you give me your definition of design, because it means different things to different people?

To me, design is more customer-focused - which is exactly what it should be if you're going to sell a product today. You've got to make sure that the product is designed in a way that doesn't just work, but is really responsive to the customer. Good design is a critical factor when people make their buying decisions.

Does Michigan have a design heritage?

Michigan has a rich design tradition. It is part of our DNA. Detroit is synonymous with automobiles and Motown music. West Central Michigan is a great center for cutting-edge office furniture, including Herman Miller, Steelcase and Haworth. That area has been very well known for its design focus from way back.

In Benton Harbor, Whirlpool has used design to turn basic household appliances into fashionable best-sellers. Michigan has also made significant contributions to architecture over the years. We have been the home of such giants as Albert Kahn, designer of the modern concrete factory; Minoru Yamasaki, the architect of the World Trade Center; and Eliel Saarinen, who co-founded and designed the Cranbrook Academy of Art. We continue to have a large concentration of phenomenal architects here today as well.

You are the first governor in the nation to promote the importance of design to your state's economy and to give it priority. Why design?

The bottom line for why design is important to the State of Michigan - especially a state that has been challenged by a global economy where we see manufacturing jobs leave - is because future growth will be based more and more on the creative work that goes into making great products, or developing great cities, or even providing great customer service.

We are going to base our economy more and more on our intellectual property, on the creative side, the value-added side of what we can offer. We have a strong record as a producer of new products, and now we want to make sure that Michigan's brand image is all about innovation, design and creativity.

Can professions in creative fields really make that much of an impact on Michigan's economic future?

The power of creativity in propelling our economy is a fundamental building block of our state's transformation. Since we have lost many repetitive-motion-type jobs, we have moved from muscle to mind, from brawn to brain, from carrying to creating. Aesthetics

are part of a functional economy. Aesthetics matter, curb appeal matters - for a state, a city, a car, or any massproduced product. We have worked to use design in our efforts to promote and reshape Michigan. We recognize the importance of design in attracting and retaining the creative workforce that is necessary for our state to survive.

Michigan is known as the world's automotive center. For decades, it has defined emerging trends. What are you doing to hang onto that reputation?

The effort that I am engaged in now is focused on the creative aspects of the products that we produce. We have the R&D facilities of domestic automakers here, and we just got Toyota to place their North American R&D center in Ann Arbor. We also got Hyundai and Nissan to locate their global R&D centers in Michigan. R&D is where design and engineering innovations emerge in this industry.

Expanding the pipeline of engineers for those facilities is an enormous focus of ours. We have policies in place to forgive loans to engineering students so we can generate the numbers of that creative workforce that we need. Related to that is our intention to excel in simulation software, which is critical in R&D facilities.

A recent Business Week article, titled "Get Creative," describes how successful companies must understand that they exist in a creative economy where design and design-thinking are essential for innovation. How does Michigan fit into that model?

Michigan is home to major industries that shape how the nation travels, works and lives.

They all rely on good design. No other state has the history and future that we have relative to design impacting people's lives. No other state has the combination of success with respect to products - namely, cars and furniture - that virtually everyone in the U.S. and the world touches. This means that huge opportunities still lie before us. Where do I think Michigan fits into this creative economy?

Michigan is poised and has taken advantage of creativity to shape its economy. We are dissatisfied with status quo. We want to continually evolve and shape and attract others who are at that level in a design, research and development economy.

Does that mean Michigan will also seek to foster the growth of new industries and businesses?

We want to be the most entrepreneurial state in the country. We want to be the place where entrepreneurs come and where they are supported and incubated. Some of the folks we want to attract are those who only need a computer and some software to provide value to what they are designing. We have smart zones attached to our 15 universities around the state as start-ups for people who can create the workforce for the 21st century.

What about jobs in the fast-growing digital arts field?

Absolutely. Diversification is important. In Michigan, we seek to foster a welcoming environment for those we fondly refer to as "the green hairs." the iconoclasts, so we can take advantage of their imagination and ease around computer technologies. When you look at the digital magic of movies and all that unbelievable software that goes into the development of video games, that's what we want to link to.

Right now those kids are going to Pixar in California. We want them here. That means we must support schools that put the focus on the creative side of digital technologies.

Michigan is the home of several respected art and design schools. Are you working with them in any way?

Yes, we have great art and design schools here - The College for Creative Studies, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Kendall College of Art & Design and others. We have been focusing on connecting the private sector with the education system, encouraging internships that give students hands-on experience in applying what they learn in real-life situations. Several active dialogues between businesses, educational institutions and economic development groups aim to identify ways to build on our creative environments. Focused scholarships, internships and interdisciplinary educational experiences, symposiums and conferences are some considerations.

Are you going to push design exposure to the high school level?

You bet. In fact, we would love for a major design firm to join with us in piloting a curriculum. We are canvassing the field for those who would help us create a high school that is focused on design. Maybe some of those folks reading @Issue would be willing to step forward.

In a manufacturing-heavy state such as Michigan, is the value of design education widely understood?

I think lay people who are not deeply imbedded in design still see art education as unrelated to practical use. There is a tendency to see design as exclusive versus inclusive.

They think of artists drawing pictures rather than about how designers recognize a need and apply their skills to improving the effectiveness, beauty, functionality and enjoyment of all the products that touch our lives. Our school systems can help provide the educational experience that integrates design into good business decisions. We want to promote that awareness.

In 2004, you introduced a pilot program called "Cool Cities" that uses environmental design to revitalize low-income downtown neighborhoods and attract businesses and a skilled workforce to the area. Could you tell us more about it?

It emerged from the idea that Michigan needs "cool cities" to attract the jobs, young professionals, diversity and innovation necessary to make the state economically competitive. It stemmed from my belief that successful neighborhood revitalization requires broad, inclusive and thoughtful planning, rather than sporadic and piecemeal projects here and there. We wanted to create places where people were willing and able to invest themselves and their resources in their homes, businesses and neighborhoods.

Strong neighborhoods linked closely with commercial districts are the key to keeping downtown areas vibrant. So two years ago, we held a conference that drew together 2,000 people from municipalities all over the state to talk about enhancing their environment.

They were invited to apply for catalyst resource grants by submitting a detailed plan on how they would enhance their neighborhood through facade and physical infrastructure improvements, addition of streetscapes including public art, creation of green spaces and parks, and rehabilitation of dilapidated buildings and the like. The first year, we had 100 cities that applied and 20 that qualified because they had phenomenal plans.

I understand that Cool Cities has been very successful.

Yes. It has opened up a whole toolbox of state resources, including expert consultants who work alongside neighborhood stakeholders, to grant recipients. It has enabled communities to redevelop factories as loft housing, revive blocks of abandoned storefronts, add miles of new landscaping, bike paths and sidewalks and even fund new mass transit systems. It has given communities a way to implement their vision for their city and move projects along faster than they could on their own. The end result is creating places that people say are cool places to work and live.

The design-related programs that you outline for Michigan encompass everything from urban renewal and new business development to education. Do they cover the full spectrum of issues Michigan faces?

Design is about problem-solving. For us, it is an opportunity to leverage technology to solve problems and sell products - whether it's an industrial product or interior design or the landscape, healthcare, the design of tourism promotion, the design of cities or the design of a new economy. It is all about breaking down the way things have been done before. We see great value in creating and sustaining the environment where creative disciplines can flourish and continue to lead the innovative process so important for our state's future. That, to me, is the richest opportunity we have.

Detroit News

March 3, 2006

House toughens standards for graduation

By 2010, requirements will include credits in math, English, science, social studies, gym, arts

Lansing- Tougher high school graduation requirements won easy approval in the Michigan House on Thursday.

The incoming freshman class would be required to pass four credits of math and English, three credits of science and social studies and one each of physical education and arts to earn a high school diploma by 2010.

Currently, the state requires only a semester of civics, putting Michigan behind most other states. Any additional mandates are left to local districts.

The House approved the measure 70-31 and sent it to the Senate.

The Senate Education Committee has four public hearings scheduled on the issue and intends to pass its own version of the requirements by the end of the month.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm and state school Supt. Michael Flanagan have requested that the mandates be finalized this month to give schools enough lead time to implement them by September.

Officials say it's imperative that Michigan raise its standards so students are ready for higher education and increasingly technical jobs.

"This couldn't come at a better time when the state is in difficult shape in terms of the economy," said Rep. Brian Palmer, R-Romeo, sponsor of the bill. "It sends a great signal to the outside world that Michigan is serious about raising the bar."

Aides to Granholm say the governor is pleased the House passed the more rigorous standards. But the governor doesn't like a provision that would let students who don't want to take the highlevel math and science classes choose an alternative curriculum after their sophomore year.

"The governor believes the early opt-out is a cop-out," said Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Granholm. Local school officials have expressed concerns about the availability of math and science teachers, additional costs, and the danger of crowding out vocational education.

Jim Sandy, who heads Michigan Business Leaders for Educational Excellence, said he would have preferred the House had kept the two credits of foreign language recommended by the State Board of Education.

"But this adds an element of rigor and challenge in our high schools, and a degree of flexibility for those kids who need it," Sandy said.

"This bill reaches the 50 to 60 percent of kids just floating through school, taking the easy way out."

MiBizWest

March 6, 2006

Rockford Construction Company

Rockford Construction Inc. is viewed by many in West Michigan as the company that has transformed ideas into concrete, glass and steel to create monumental structures and

breathe new life into landmark buildings. The multitude of high-profile projects successfully executed by Rockford Construction has fueled the growth of downtown Grand Rapids and the regional economy.

As the recipient of the 2006 Outstanding Growth Award by ACG Western Michigan, Rockford Construction is being recognized for its own corporate growth. And what remarkable growth there has been.

Rockford Construction posted revenues of \$132 million in 2002. Revenues for 2005 stood at \$272 million, more than double the 2002 figure.

When asked if he expected this kind of growth, Rockford Construction CEO John Wheeler answered, "Deep in my heart, yes.

"Not being arrogant, but being honest, this is a huge industry. If you're willing to travel and take good care of customers and they are in a growth mode, they'll take you along.

We've been able to follow some of the best companies in West Michigan around the Midwest and build for them," he said.

It is Rockford's ability to establish long-term relationships with clients that has given it a steady revenue stream and a Midwest footprint that is now stretching nationwide. The construction firm has had a 15-year relationship with Meijer Inc, completing 250 projects in five states.

Rockford has built 340 Family video stores in 12 states during its 11-year relationship with the retailer. Rockford established a regional office Charlotte, N.C., in 2004 to support the design-build projects it does for Family Video and just a few months ago opened another office in the Dallas-Fort Worth area to assist Family video with its expansion there.

Wheeler said relationship building is not like dating in high school where you get a new girlfriend every Friday night and take her to the dance.

"There's a lot more energy between the client and the contractor to continue these relationships for a long time," he said. "The constant reinvention of ingenuity, of construction materials and methods, of constantly re-evaluating your pricing, your scheduling, the quality of your supervision, your safety that has been the backbone of our Meijer and Family video relationships and our seven-year relationship with Meritage Hospitality Group."

Wheeler explained that the longer the relationship, the more personalities gel and trust deepens between the parties.

"Now you're just down to pricing, design and technique and that's nice."

A background in architecture has led Wheeler to make value engineering a true core competency at Rockford Construction. Design methods, material prices, timing of deliveries and a cost analysis of materials and maintenance are reviewed before the onset of construction.

"Our upfront construction time is equal to the actual construction time in the field.

That's pretty unusual for a general contractor," Wheeler said. "We'll work on a project with a client 810 months previous to breaking ground, and maybe the job is only a six-month job. But we evaluate everything to the benefit of the building and the owner's needs."

Wheeler launched his company in 1987 using the same creative design-build and turnkey solutions he used to hone his business skills while working in Indianapolis, Ind. Wheeler said the vision of Rockford remains the same as it was in the beginning.

"The concept of customer service being real and not just lip service continues to help our company grow," said Wheeler. Wheeler said if there was a turning point in Rockford Construction's history, it came in 1994 when Meijer asked the company to build 60 gas stations during an 18-month Midwest rollout.

"When Meijer put that confidence in Rockford, I think it was a major defining moment that let us know we could build this company. It made Mike VanGessel and myself realize that if we have a little courage and a little insight we can take our expertise on the road and make this happen," Wheeler said.

Along with its long-standing relationships with the likes of Meijer and Family Video, Rockford has been seen as a driving force in the redevelopment of downtown Grand Rapids. Rockford has built, historically restored or renovated more than 2.6 million square feet of space downtown, including the renovation of the nine-story Steketee's building, now home of Blue Cross Blue Shield of West Michigan.

When it comes to the revitalization of downtown Grand Rapids, "We are by no means done," said Wheeler.

"We're still acquiring empty buildings and looking for opportunities to bring more mixed use downtown. Our vision is a work in progress. I would say there's a good 10 year life left in things that need to be improved and/or thought of and built in downtown Grand Rapids to make it the true West Michigan hub that it deserves to be."

Expect Rockford Construction to continue to grow. It's all part of the plan, remarked Wheeler.

"We are obsessive planners. We operate under the assumption that if you don't have a plan, you'll never know if you hit a target," he said.

Rockford Construction President Mike VanGessel agreed, adding, "We have a strategic plan that is revisited annually. Now we're lifting our eyes off the road and looking at the next generation of Rockford Construction - partners, employees, clients, and services."

To that end, the firm reorganized in 2005 in preparation of the securing of larger, more complex projects. Five vice presidents and four project executives were added.

Rockford's three year strategic plan calls for 12 project executives to be in place.

"We've been grooming and working with these folks. Many of our Vice Presidents and Project Executives have grown with our company over the years and advanced from within, while other VPs and PEs were brought in for the purpose of adding specific expertise to our company," said VanGessel. "We need to put these people in place so we can start training that next generation.

The corporate culture at Rockford revolves around the old adage "work hard-play hard," The company vision is shared at monthly meetings and company retreats. Wheeler considers his 195 employees friends and trusted confidants first before anything else.

"Internally we have a 'no negative energy' policy, and we will continue that. It makes for a solid, fun atmosphere to work in," said Wheeler, adding that employees are encouraged to join nonprofit boards and get involved in the community.

Rockford Construction's upward growth pattern has exceeded both Wheeler and VanGessel's expectations, and they thank their staff of highly talented people for the success.

"We have been extremely blessed with the professionalism of these people, who have given their life's energy to this company," said Wheeler. "They have made it work."

Established: 1987 in Rockford

Sales Growth: In three years Rockford's total revenue more than doubled, growing from \$132 million to \$272 million.

Profitability: During the same three-year period, gross profit increased 54% and net income more than doubled.

Industry Rankings: Highest ranked West Michigan general contractor on *Engineering News Record's* 2005 Top 400 Contractor's List, ranked #227 (1998) and #372 (1999) on *Inc. 500's The List* Fastest Growing Private Companies in America.

Employment: Grew from 50 to 195 employees in the past 10 years.

Regional Offices: Retail rollout projects in key markets spurred the establishment of four regional offices since 2003: Auburn Hills, MI; Traverse City, MI; Charlotte, NC; and Dallas/Fort Worth, TX.

Community Involvement: Rockford's corporate giving plan directs charitable support to causes that advocate for the "hungry, helpless and homeless." In addition to charitable giving that supports hundreds of local nonprofit organizations, Rockford has also developed and manages two annual fundraisers - Rally for Hope and Hunger and Hammer for Hope and Hunger.

Community Reinvestment: In partnership with Rockford's sister company, Rockford Development Group, Rockford has been a key player in spurring downtown Grand Rapids' revitalization along Monroe Center's retail corridor and Cherry Street Landing, which is home to several Rockford projects: Cooley Law School and WMU (educational), Bank of Holland (institutional), EQ3 (retail), Black Rose, Irish Pub (restaurant) and 70 Ionia (mixed use).

Pioneer

March 6, 2006

Wireless capability opens options for students

BIG RAPIDS - Term papers, research projects, classroom message boards and the World Wide Web are all part of day-to-day life for college students.

Now, instead of being stuck behind a computer screen when the weather is gorgeous outside, Ferris State University students in Big Rapids can access the Internet while enjoying the sunshine on the Campus Quad.

A project designed to create wireless capability for users of the FSU network began in 2005. Its goal was to provide students with options.

"It's really about taking down the traditional barriers for the things students do for an education," said John Urbanick, chief technology officer for information services.

FSU President David Eisler has outlined goals for Ferris that would create a learning-centered university, where everyone is engaged and part of a community, Urbanick noted.

"This wireless program touches all three of those pillars. It goes to the whole learning environment," he continued, adding students can contact faculty members "any time, from anywhere" and online students can access their classes from more locations than before.

Currently, outdoor wireless is available on campus east of State Street and in a location containing most of the classroom buildings and residence halls west of State Street. Indoors, wireless networks have been established in common areas of residence halls and academic buildings.

The outdoor areas, designated as Zones 1 through 5, were selected for initial implementation for several reasons, Urbanick explained. Those areas are frequently used by students, faculty and staff, have high classroom density and a favorable topography for implementing wireless communication.

Topography is important because the wireless access points - canister sending the wireless signals - must all be at the same height so they can "talk to each other," explained Jim Maat, wireless program manager.

The canisters, about the size of a coffee can, work on three frequencies. A Frequency is used for the hexagon-shaped canisters to communicate with each other; B (11-megabit) and G (54-megabit) Frequencies are used by laptop computers and other portable technology devices to access the network.

While most of the outdoor areas will have a signal in the completed zones, there will be some places it won't work, Maat said.

Wireless technology has been around for several years, pointed out Technical Services Manager Jim Cook, but only recently has it gotten to a point of being realistic to implement and use. Still, it isn't fool-proof.

"The signal cannot penetrate water," Cook said. "Leaves hold water (and can block the signal)."

Wireless coverage was designed to create maximum coverage of areas where students are likely to be, such as green spaces and parking lots.

The remainder of the outdoor zones - Zones 6 through 8 - will be completed as time and budget allow; in numerical order. The target date for completion is summer 2006.

Indoors, wireless capability was first set up in areas where students were most likely to be found.

"Our strategy in deploying the wireless was for the students first," Urbanick began, adding the academic buildings would follow the residence halls and the administration buildings would be last. "We're here for the students; we focused on the students.

...The students are our priority. They are a mobile population, while the majority of the faculty goes to a place and works. ... (Students) want to be able to be mobile. We want to bring down the number of hours they have to be behind a desk at a central location."

Wireless capability indoors is approximately 95 percent completed, Cook said, with a goal of completing administration buildings by the 2006 fall semester. However, there is no set schedule for the indoor portion of the project.

Whether indoors or out, the wireless capability on campus is limited to registered users of FSU's network - students, faculty and staff from any Ferris location.

"We do recognize we need to figure out how to have guest users," Urbanick said. As yet, there are ideas about how best to accommodate guest users but no defined strategy, he added.

The reason the network is not open to all users is the risk involved with such a system from viruses and other similar problems, Urbanick explained.

Pioneer

March 7, 2006

Local hospital deserves praise

Congratulations to the people at Mecosta County Medical Center, recently named as one of the nation's top 100 hospitals for 2005.

Wow, what a year. First the hospital administration completes a major renovation and expansion program; then it changes the facility's name from Mecosta County General Hospital to Mecosta County Medical Center; and now the facility is listed among the best in the nation in 2005.

Some people may think that we still live in the northern "sticks" of Michigan, but they obviously haven't paid attention to changing times.

We're not only home to a fantastic hospital financed by the citizens of this county, but Big Rapids also hosts the resurgent main campus of Ferris State University, one of the state's 15 public universities.

The city of Big Rapids operates from a recently renovated city hall and one of the best public safety facilities in this part of the state.

And the city and county celebrated their 150th year during 2005 during which the city dedicated the completion of the second phase of the extremely popular Riverwalk project, the completion of a new bandshell along that Riverwalk and the addition of a new mural at the river's edge near the old north-end dam site on the Muskegon River.

Now the hospital garners national attention in a city on the move.

We've been offering a lot of congratulatory notes on various improvement projects around the community in recent years and are certainly happy to add the hospital's accomplishments.

While Michigan had more than its share of hospitals on the list with a total of ten, any institution making a list of only 100 from a total of 50 states certainly deserves a lot of praise.

So we think the administrators, doctors, nurses and all other employees at the hospital should take a bow for proper utilization of the money the citizens of this county approved to provide the best health care services and facilities possible.

Pioneer
March 8, 2006

Rotary Club to team with Ferris State's formula racing team

BIG RAPIDS - Ferris State University's formula racing team is to participate in the world's largest engineering challenge taking on 160 universities from around the globe.

Racing at the Ford Proving Grounds to witness which team makes the best formula racing car. The big race takes place in May and the Rotary Club of Big Rapids is throwing the largest Texas Hold `Em game in the area to help sponsor the students with large cash prizes to the top 10 percent of poker players along with entertaining giveaways and raffles.

The game will take place at the Holiday Inn of Big Rapids March 17 with registration at 6 p.m and the game starting at 7 p.m.

Food and drinks will be available all night.

Cost is a \$50 buy in and \$35 double-ups your chips and \$5 bad beat bet.